



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

March 2016 Newsletter

## Assesing Elk Health

This month, Jackson and Pinedale Region brucellosis program personnel were busy capturing elk using both corral traps and chemical immobilization from feedgrounds to continue long term brucellosis seroprevalence trend data, and to deploy GPS collars and VITs on/in elk for brucellosis investigations. A total of 557 elk were handled this winter, including trapping 498 animals on Greys (Alpine), Dell, Fish, Scab and Muddy Creek feedgrounds, and darting 59 elk from the feedsled on other State feedgrounds and the National Elk Refuge. Totals of 48 collars and 17 VITs were deployed. In total, 334 yearling and adult cows were bled this month; serologic assays are currently underway at the WGFD Vet Lab in Laramie.



*Piney brucellosis biologist Eric Maichak assists a chemically immobilized and reversed elk at Bench Corral feedground; the elk was darted to remove a GPS collar it had worn for two years, but the drop-off mechanism had failed. Photos by Jared Rogerson*

Additionally, brucellosis personnel spent considerable time visiting with elk feeders to ensure low density feeding (Below, Soda Lake feedground) was occurring on select Target feedgrounds. Low density feeding has been shown to reduce contacts with aborted fetuses by 66-75% and is an extremely easy method to directly reduce brucellosis prevalence among elk attending feedgrounds, and indirectly reduce risk of brucellosis spillover into livestock.







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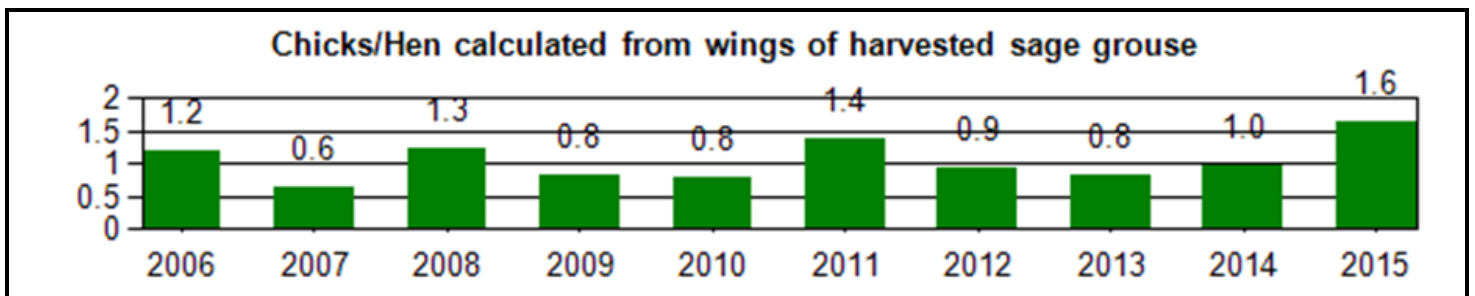


## Sage Grouse Chicks Up in 2015

Each fall, hunters are asked to deposit one wing from each harvested sage grouse in the wing barrels set up along popular travel routes. Last fall, in the Upper Green River basin, a total of 482 wings were provided thanks to hunters. From this, wildlife biologists are able to calculate the number of chicks per hen which gives an indication of productivity for the population.

The 2015 chick:hen ratio (based on harvested wing analysis) was 1.6 chicks per hen, which was the highest recorded for

this area in recent years. This level of productivity is typically associated with a stable to increasing population. This is consistent with the statewide 2015 lek data, which indicated a 66% increase in the average numbers of males on leks.



Sage grouse nest success and chick survival have been linked to habitat condition, specifically shrub height and cover, live and residual (remaining from the previous year) grass height and cover, and forb cover. The shrubs (primarily sagebrush) and grasses provide screening cover from predators and weather while the forbs provide food in the form of the plant material itself and in insects that use the forbs for habitat. Spring precipitation is an important determinant of the quantity and quality of these vegetation characteristics. Naturally, residual grass height and cover depends on the previous year's growing conditions and grazing pressure while live grass and forb cover are largely dependent on the current year's precipitation.

## LaBarge Creek Cat

This adult mountain lion was observed by Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas feeding on an elk carcass near the road on Labarge Creek. Apparently, some others also noticed it as the lion was brought in the following day as a harvest check.

*Photo by Mark Thonhoff*





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(Above) Piney Brucellosis Biologist Eric Maichak collects a blood sample from a tranquilized bull moose in Big Piney. (Right) The young bull is released to its new home along the New Fork River.

## Big Piney Town Moose Moved

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas and Piney Brucellosis Biologist Eric Maichak tranquilized and moved the Big Piney “town moose” as it was persistently residing at one of the local preschools. The young bull was moved to a less populated area along the New Fork River.



## Early Antler Hunters

While patrolling the winter range south of Big Piney, warden Hymas observed three individuals from Idaho pick up a deer antler in violation of the shed antler regulation. After contacting the subjects, Hymas found two other antlers in their truck. Citations were issued to Thomas Rich and Dallas Turnbow. Both were required to come back to Wyoming for a court appearance and the Judge fined the subjects \$520 and prohibited them from antler hunting in Wyoming until 2018.

Hymas reports a marked increase in public reports of winter range violations or suspected illegal activity regarding the shed antler season. While most of the activity is legal, Hymas is encouraged by the overall support of the public watching out for the wintering wildlife and any illegal activity.

## Winter Mortality

While winter mortality in our local mule deer does not appear to be excessive thus far, however warden Hymas has investigated a few dead bucks on the winter range. All appeared to have died of natural causes of one sort or another. This nice trophy buck was found dead east of LaBarge.







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## Still Time For Ice Fishing

Now is a good time for ice fishing in the Pinedale Region. Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea reports that the "Fishing's been good with a lot of big fish being caught right now." The derby had one of the largest fish entered in decades. Roads have been plowed to Willow and Boulder, with access to most of Fremont and Halfmoon still open. "A lot of good late season action, with nicer weather, longer days, people should be getting out!" Anglers are encouraged

to stop by the Game & Fish office and pick up their Angler's Diary to record their success this season. Diaries can then be turned in at the office at the end of the season. The Fisheries Division will use this data to aid in population statistics and fish management on area lakes.



## FIVE ICE TIPS

### 1. CHECK THICKNESS

Contact a local bait shop or sporting goods store to ask about ice conditions and then check once you get there. The rough guidelines for clear, new solid ice are:

- 2 inches – Stay off
- 4 inches – OK for ice fishing or other activities on foot
- Check the thickness of the ice every 100 to 150 feet.
- Never take any vehicles, snowmobiles or ATVs onto the ice.

### 2. BE SURE IT'S SAFE

- Avoid pressure ridges in the ice and large cracks that can emerge in a lake
- Clear ice is stronger than white ice, which has frozen, thawed and refrozen and is not always stable
- White ice can also be from air bubbles or frozen snow and is much weaker than clear ice. For white ice, double the recommended thickness.

### 3. REMEMBER

No matter your preparation and ice conditions, ice should never be considered 100 percent safe. Be prepared and cautious at all times.

### 4. BUDDY SYSTEM

Anglers should never fish alone. Always fish with someone else and be certain to let a friend know where you are going.

### 5. STAY WARM

To prevent hypothermia if an ice fishing accident does occur, pack an extra set of clothes and hot liquids.

## PRACTICE ICE SAFETY



## What else should I know?

Fluctuating water levels in reservoirs and wind impact ice conditions and can create dangerous ice conditions. Be aware of recent weather conditions and temperatures and scout out the lake you wish to fish for overflow, wet areas, and open water. With variable ice conditions across the state and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call their regional office to inquire about ice conditions.

Game and Fish discourages driving any motorized vehicle on a frozen lake as well as ice fishing on rivers and other

moving water that has frozen over. Remember to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device and carry ice safety picks. Ice cleats are also a good idea. Keep a throw rope handy in case someone falls in.

Anglers venturing on fishing trips this winter should also keep in mind the Fishing Regulations and the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provisions, available on the Game and Fish website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov), regional offices and Cheyenne Headquarters.



## Contact Game & Fish

Cheyenne Headquarters: 1-800-842-1934

Casper Regional Office: 1-800-233-8544

Cody Regional Office: 1-800-654-1178

Green River Regional Office: 1-800-843-8096

Jackson Regional Office: 1-800-423-4113

Lander Regional Office: 1-800-654-7862

Laramie Regional Office: 1-800-843-2352

Pinedale Regional Office: 1-800-452-9107

Sheridan Regional Office: 1-800-331-9834





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*Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall presents Pam Chrisman with the 2015 Landowner of the Year award for the Pinedale Region.*

### 2015 Landowner of the Year

Pam Chrisman is a stalwart in Sublette County when it comes to maintaining and supporting wildlife and fish habitats, and over the years, has displayed a strong land management ethic in conserving these habitats. She has been involved in preserving crucial riparian willow bottoms and cottonwood galleries along LaBarge Creek, Fish Creek, South Piney Creek and the Green River and her interests have included maintaining and preserving movement and migration corridors on her ranches for segments of the largest Shiras moose and mule deer populations in Wyoming. She has initiated a reconstruction of pasture fences on her properties to ensure these fences are of a standard to provide the necessary corridors for unrestricted and unhindered travel for big game.



In addition, Pam was one of several permittees involved with the Piney Creeks Vegetation Restoration project after the 2012 Fontenelle Wildfire. In order to maximize the stabilization and recovery of her allotments, she chose to rest these allotments and utilize different pasture away from her base operation. Both of these projects voluntarily inflicted burdens on the ranch due to decreased efficiencies in daily operations. Her involvement shows a commitment to maintaining a working ranch and all of the essential wildlife habitats that are on her property.







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## In Search of Wolverines

Pinedale Wolf Biologist Ken Mills joined Nongame Biologist Clint Atkinson on a ski excursion to rebait and collect photos at a remote camera station set up to detect the presence of wolverines in the Wind River Range. This winter, Wyoming Game and Fish nongame personnel Lee Tafelmeyer, Seth Halman and Atkinson, along with numerous volunteers and other Department employees, have made visits to 23 wolverine camera stations in the mountains of western Wyoming. So far, two camera stations have detected wolverines! Both de-

tectations occurred in the Wind River Range. One occurred on the western side and the other occurred on the southeastern part of the range. These detections are very exciting, as they have occurred at the extreme southern edge of currently known wolverine range in Wyoming. Crews will continue to check and rebait camera sites during the month of March and then begin to take down the camera stations in April.



*Photos: (Left) Game & Fish Nongame Biologist Clint Atkinson checks a remote camera and bait station in Boulder Basin north of Pinedale. (Below) Atkinson breaks trail in Boulder Basin in the northern Wind River Range north of Pinedale. Photos by Ken Mills*

*(Right) One of two different wolverines detected remote cameras in the Wind River Range.*







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## Living with Large Carnivores

It's that time of year again when bears are waking up and people are preparing to enjoy the great outdoors. As spring arrives, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department [reminds outdoor enthusiasts to be "bear aware"](#) and take the necessary precautions to avoid conflicts with large carnivores.



Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator Brian DeBolt said that at this time of year, bears are emerging from their dens. "Typically, male bears emerge from their dens in mid-March and April, while females and young-of-the-year cubs emerge in late April and early May," DeBolt said "This makes it an ideal time to attend a workshop to learn about large carnivores and how to avoid encounters and potential conflicts."

Educational workshops are being offered in communities across the state.

**April 6—Sublette County Library, Pinedale 6:00-8:00pm**

**May 12—Teton County Library, Jackson, 5:30-7:30pm**

At each workshop, Game and Fish large carnivore managers will present information about bear, mountain lion and wolf ecology, population status, management and more importantly, what people should do in an encounter situation. In addition, there will be discussion on preemptive measures to be taken by the public in order to reduce the likelihood of conflicts with carnivores.

## Talk of the Town...

Due to the nice weather we experienced in February, the frost line was pushed down around town and we weren't the only ones contending with frozen pipes. (Right) Pinedale Habitat & Access worker Kyle Berg keeps a positive attitude while digging up the frozen pipes in the Pinedale office parking lot.

